

**House of Representatives  
Congressman Bill Enyart  
Floor Remarks on Medicare  
April 3, 2014**

Madame Speaker, I rise today to show support for the 50 million Americans enrolled in Medicare.

Medicare is vital not only to my district, but our entire country – which is why my fellow colleagues and I should support its promise to all our citizens who have earned it, who have paid for it through their taxes and who now rely on it for a stable health care system.

Medicare has a long and valued history since its inception in 1965. Social Security recipients have consistently benefited from the opportunity to access quality, affordable health coverage – a right now guaranteed to those who worked hard for this privilege.

122,380 constituents from the 12th district of Illinois participate in the Medicare program. That's one out of every seven people in my district. Many of these constituents are disabled, and almost all are on a fixed or limited income. Medicare gives these citizens the opportunity to receive essential medical care and to take part in preventive care programs designed to maintain good health, which lowers the cost of healthcare – **lowers the cost**.

Of those 122,000 Southern Illinoisans, over 28,000 also participate in Medicare Advantage. That's 1 in 4 taking part in a program specifically designed for those seniors who have high rates of chronic disease. Medicare Advantage focuses on prevention and disease management, which reduces the need for unnecessary hospitalizations – keeping our most vulnerable populations healthier and out of the hospital waiting room.

Medicare and Medicare Advantage serve our seniors, low income families, and those susceptible to disease.

Are these the populations we want to cast aside?

Are these the citizens that we need not care for?

I say no. Yet, the Republican budget unveiled this week, virtually eliminates Medicare for future enrollees. It includes plans to shift healthcare costs to seniors. It removes the guarantee provided by our current Medicare system to make quality, affordable health coverage available for those who need it most. It undermines the promise our country made to its citizens – that if you work hard, you pay your taxes, someday should you need it, your healthcare needs will be met.

The proposed Republican budget also implements what they label a premium support system – a plan to move Medicare to a voucher program. I vehemently oppose this proposition. **Our seniors don't need a healthcare coupon – they need healthcare.**

They need the ability to choose their own doctors. They need the ability to access billions in savings for prescription drugs. They need access to free wellness visits – all of which are in jeopardy under the Republican budget plan.

I'm tired of hearing proposals to eliminate vital government services simply because of party ideology. Let us not govern blindly through rhetoric and sound bites, but rather, let us work for our constituents to better serve those who have paid into the Medicare system their entire working life and now need it most.

**Medicare serves those who have earned it, who have paid for it, and who deserve it.**

And should we take away that service, I fear what the future may hold for our seniors.

Seniors like Carolyn Morgan from DuQuoin, Illinois. Carolyn needed Medicare's help in March of 2013 when she became ill and was hospitalized, put on oxygen, and given a daily regimen of prescription drugs.

I hold her letter to my office in my hand. Carolyn states, "I cannot afford out of pocket healthcare. My supplemental insurance is useless without Medicare, so it has been wasted money every month."

I know I'll be spending the remainder of this Congressional session fighting for Carolyn. Fighting for our seniors and disabled, to make sure the healthcare promises we made so many years ago, are not in danger from partisan budget cuts.

My fellow colleagues, I urge you to join me. Let's avoid a grim future for the elderly, the disabled, and the fixed-income citizens of this great nation. Let's help Carolyn and the many more American citizens just like her. Let's fight to keep Medicare.